

Two Continental Journeys During 1978

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(1) Central and Northern Greece in June

Greece is always a great source of attraction from every angle, not least its flora and lepidoptera. Though I had already paid three visits to this wonderful part of Europe (*vide* this journal, **75**: 233, **84**: 33 and **87**: 77), I was encouraged to go there yet again when I saw that Peregrine Holidays based on Oxford were arranging a botanical tour of central and northern Greece during the middle of June. When I made my first enquiries it was fully booked, but in the spring a vacancy materialised so that I was able to be included in the party which left England on June 7th. There were 25 naturalists, all dedicated botanists led by Mr. Hugh Singe of Kew. Though I felt rather "the odd man out", I derived some comfort to learn that on an almost similar itinerary in 1977 at this period of the year, the tour was accompanied by Dr. Jeremy Holloway, a very noted entomologist and field collector mainly in the Far East. On this earlier occasion, he had recorded no less than almost 200 species of butterflies, so that I hoped to emulate him. In spite of ideal conditions during our fortnight with daily temperatures in the 80s, the season was very different from that of 1977.

We reached Athens airport on the afternoon of June 7th, and our party at once left in a small motor coach on the road to Delphi. Our venue that evening was Arachova, a small town a few miles east of the famous ancient resort. We all put up at an excellent Xenia, and the next morning early we left for Delphi which I had visited in 1963 and again in 1971. I at once made for the rocky piece of ground overlooking the Temple of Athene, just past the Castalia spring. This area had proved very fruitful on the two previous occasions, but as soon as I reached it, I at once realised the lateness and leanness of the season. *Melanargia larissa* Geyer was very sparse as also was *Maniola jurtina* L., and it was only when I came to several clumps of valerian that there was any quantity of insects. These included only a single *Papilio alexanor* Esper — and a few males of *Goneperyx farinosa* Zeller. There were also singles of *Polygonia egea* Cramer and of *Hipparchia aristaeus senthes* Fruhstorfer.

The next morning of June 9th, we set out early again to make the ascent of Mt. Parnassus by the road that was completed in the early 1970's. Little was flying on the plateau beneath the mountain, and when we reached the hut at about 6,000 ft., it was obvious the high level species were not out. There were large mats of the prickly astragalus, the food-plant of *Colias libanetica heldreichi* Staudinger of which Dr. Holloway took several examples at this date in 1977, but a thorough survey in brilliant sunshine failed to reveal any. The

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only insects flying at this altitude were many *Aglais urticae* L. and singles of *Iphioides podalirius* L. *Pyrameis cardui* L. at slightly lower levels.

Yet another early start on the 10th, took our party via Itea along the gulf of Corinth westwards to Naupaktos, the site of the naval battle of Lepanto in 1571, then to Missolonghi where Byron died in 1824, and finally to the large town of Joannina only a few miles from the Albanian border. Again a spacious Xenia was our haven. This picturesque town has on its immediate outskirts a large lake with a sizeable island at its centre. Most of us spent the Sunday, the 11th, surveying its monasteries and other locations of interest, notably the marshes bordering the islands. These harboured several Great Reed Warblers, which vied with each other with their raucous call. The flora was especially fine on the circular path, but it produced very few butterflies, only a few Pierids including *Euchloë ausonia* Hbn. The afternoon was spent at the famous ancient shrine of Dodona with its large amphitheatre, around which were flying many *Aporia crataegi* L., with numerous Blues mainly *Polyommatus icarus* Rott., and a few *Plebicula amanda* Schneider. The morning of June 12th saw us at the small town of Aresti, high up on the edge of the Pindos range and even closer to Albania. A track skirted the mountainside with plenty of rich vegetation, but in spite of a brilliant day the paucity of insects was remarkable. Along the path were flying an occasional *Melitaea didyma* Esp. and *M. phoebe* D. & S. *Gegenes pumilio* Hffmsg. was skimming over the ground in one spot and there was a single *Pyrameis atalanta*. On June 13th, our venue was another small Pindos locality, that of Monodendri. We halted at a high area with large rocks where we saw one of the rarest of European plants, *Ramonda serbica* akin to the African violet. In some adjoining meadows were flying numerous species including many *Pieris rapae* L. On a dry path I disturbed a couple of congregations of Blues which turned out to be mainly *Cyaniris semiargus* Rott., with *Plebicula thersites* Cantener and a single *Cupido osiris* Meigen. Also there was *Pyrgus malvoides* Elwes and Edwards, while among the rocks was flying *Lasiommata petropolitana* Fab. Later that morning we visited a local monastery in the great heat, and on the way there noted *Pieris manni* Mayer flying with *Leptidea sinapis* L. That afternoon we went on by a very tortuous and picturesque route through the Pindos range for nearly 100 miles to the small town of Metsevon, almost in the centre of Greece, where we put up at a very pleasant alpine type of hotel. The next morning, June 14th, our coach took us up to the high level meadows at some 4,000 ft. where we spent a brilliantly sunny and warm day among a galaxy of choice flora including a large purple patch of the magnificent *Salvia grandiflora*, but most astonishingly the lepidoptera were sadly lacking except for a few of the common Pierids as *A. crataegi*, an occasional *Iphioides podalirius* L. and *Colias croceus* Fourc. It was very disappointing not to see

more on the wing in this very luscious environment. The morning of the 15th we once more set out at a very early hour to cover the big distance to the Aegean coast. Our first stop was at the Katara Pass at over 5,000 ft. but nothing of note was flying at this altitude. Our next halt was at the town of Meteora with its famous monasteries perched high up on pinnacles of rock. Two of these were visited. At one, two huge, full-fed larvae of *Saturnia pyri* L. were located on a small bush, and as we were leaving the other, a *P. alexanor* gave a good display on thistles in front of the whole party. We then proceeded right across the edge of the Plain of Thessaly in the centre of Greece, via Larissa to the seaside resort of Platamon, putting up at a large hotel on the main Athens to Salonika highway. Our venue for the 16th was Mount Olympos, which was reached by a very winding mountain road that ended at the small location of Prioni, which was surrounded by massive woods mainly of beech at about 3,000 ft. Here was quite a congregation of butterflies in the glades on these lower slopes of this highest and famous Greek summit. By far the most numerous was *Issoria lathonia* L., with a good many *Clossiana euphrosyne* L. *G. farinosa* was also in some numbers and there were mainly singles of *L. petropolitana*, *Celastrina argiolus* L., *Aricia agestis* D. & S., *Callophrys rubi* L. and *Ochlodes venatus faunus* Turati. Some of the party who had scaled the higher levels said they had seen several *Nymphalis antiopa* L. and a number of the remarkable endemic plants of the mountain. The following day, June 17th, we moved south to another delightful resort on the borders of the Aegean at Isangarada to a very attractive hotel hidden among the wooded western slopes of Mt. Pelion. Two days were spent at this very pleasant locality which in spite of the heat and sun produced very little of note except for a few more *N. antiopa* and *Limenitis reducta* Staud. Refreshing bathes were had each day by most of the participants. Early on June 20th we set our course still further southward. We reached the big port of Volos by a very tortuous mountain road and then soon hit the big north-south-highway along which we made a short halt at the site of the famous battle of Thermopylae which is very suitably commemorated with a fine statue. We sped down the wide route and were soon in Athens which was in intense heat. That evening I was kindly entertained by Mr. John Coutsis, the eminent authority on Greek butterflies who showed me his splendid collection of them. During this period, Salonika was struck by a violent earthquake which fortunately was not felt in Athens some 300 miles away. After a very sultry morning spent in the city at one of its new large hotels, we took plane back to Heathrow on the 21st after what had proved a most enjoyable couple of weeks spent among the flora and fauna of this glorious country.

(2) Morocco in July

Morocco is another most attractive and productive country for lepidoptera which I had already visited three times in 1965, 1969 and 1972, but in the spring of these years (*vide* this Journal 77: 77, 81: 287 and 85: 241). I thought I would try to sample its fauna in the late summer. The opportunity arose in July when my niece invited me to come and stay at Rabat where her husband was Chargé d'Affaires at the British Embassy. As all flights to Gibraltar were fully booked, I flew direct to Tangier on the afternoon of the 18th. It was late when we arrived so that I had to put up for the night, and was fortunate in finding accommodation at the well-known Hotel Minzah. The following morning of the 19th, I picked up a small Renault and was soon speeding along the coastal route to the south which I knew so well, but in spite of the intense heat little seemed to be on the wing at my various halts. I only saw *Euchloë ausonia* Hbn. flying near Larache. The 175-mile journey was completed by early evening, and I was met in Rabat by my niece, who conducted me to their spacious house on the outskirts of the city. It had a small garden rich with many flowering plants which boded well. The next day by early morning, *Pieris rapae* L. was in quantity around the bushes together with a number of *Pararge aegeria* L. with very orange markings. Later that day, we visited the residence of the British Ambassador which was being renovated for a new occupant. In the garden were flying *Iphiclidus feisthameli* Dup., some huge examples with very long tails, appreciably different from *I. podalirius* L. On July 20th the temperature exceeded 100°F in the shade when I went to the fine Zoo, situated in a large park some five miles from the centre of Rabat. Here several *Colias croceus* Fourc. were careering about the enclosures. Later that day my relatives' garden was quite productive of this species and also of many Lycaenids, in particular several *Syntarus pirithous* L., while *Lampides boeticus* L. was flitting around some aromatic plants. The buddleia was also very attractive to Vanessids such as *Nymphalis atalanta* L., *Polyommatus icarus* Rott. also put in appearance. Newcomers to the garden on the 22nd were *Heodes phloeas* L., *Zizeeria knysna* Trimen and *Cupido lorquinii* H.-S. *I. feisthameli* used to arrive almost daily on the big buddleia about midday.

The morning of July 24th I set out for the Middle Atlas which had been my venue both in 1969 and 1972. I followed the excellent highroad towards Meknes and then turned south, steadily ascending till I reached the Forêt de Jaba just north of Ifrane which was once more to be my haven. Here in the forest at over 5,000 fe., the heat was still intense with quite a number of insects flying by the roadside, though in nothing like the numbers of my two spring visits. *Maniola jurtina* L. was well to the fore with a few *Pontia daplidice* L., and near the river below Ifrane, *P. rapae* was in great plenty. Further up in the vicinity of Ifrane were several *Hipyarchia alcyone caroli* Rothsch., a distinct sub-species of this widespread

species. They mostly disported themselves on the edges of the cedar forest which was my venue the next morning of the 25th, but it was soon evident the profusion of insects which pervaded this area in the spring, was already passed. There was no sign of the two large fritillaries *Argynnis lyauteyi* Oberthur and *A. auresiana* Fruhstorfer. However, a fine female *A. pandora* D. & S. did put in appearance, a late emergence. I did a short tour under ideal conditions revisiting my former haunts round Misschliffen and the forest above Azrou, all of which yielded very little. There was an occasional *P. aegeria*, *C. croceus* and *I. feisthameli*. The next day with a blazing sun, I went again to the ground bordering the cedars, where a particular low-growing plant with pink flowers was attracting a good many Lycaenids. These included mainly *Plebicula thersites* Cantener, *P. icarus*, *Aricia cramera* Eschscholtz and a late *Callophrys rubi* L.; also, a very worn *Melanargia lucasi* Rambur together with *Vanessa cardui* L. Later that day, it did not take me long to cover the 145 miles back to Rabat. I was glad to have been once more in the fine country of the Middle Atlas, though the showing of insects was disappointing. Most of the species already mentioned were flying in my relatives' garden on my last full day with them, July 27th, which was again exceptionally hot. On the 28th, I went on an excellent express train direct to Tangier putting up once more at the El Minzah. The following morning I went to the airport to find the flight to Madrid heavily delayed. We eventually reached the Spanish capital in the early afternoon to find there was yet another lengthy hold-up owing to the strike of the French air controllers. Eventually we took off about midnight, reaching Heathrow in the early hours of the 30th after what had been a most pleasant if not an over-rewarding visit to this most attractive part of North Africa.

FOODPLANTS OF PHYLONORYCTER TRIFASCIELLA HAWORTH

— The campus of the Technical College at Bromley, Kent contains an ornamental planting of *Leycesteria formosa* Wall (Flowering Nutmeg). These shrubs have for some years supported a small colony of *Phyllonorycter emberizaepenella* Bouche. A few mined leaves were collected in early October 1978, but for various reasons were not immediately transferred to their winter quarters in the garden. On 22nd October, a single specimen of *P. trifasciella* was seen resting on the leaves, and subsequent inspection revealed a small underside mine in the apex of a leaf, with the pupal case of *trifasciella* protruding. The mine was inconspicuous when compared to the large, disfiguring workings of *emberizaepenella*. The only other record of *trifasciella* feeding on *L. formosa* I can locate is for a single, atypical, upperside mine from Cornwall (Gregory, *Ent. Rec.*, 84: 78). *P. trifasciella* occurs throughout the Bromley area on its normal foodplant, Honeysuckle, although I bred a single third brood specimen from Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos* sp.) during 1976 from a wood near Orpington, where Honeysuckle and Snowberry occur together. — P. A. SOKOLOFF, 4 Steep Close, Orpington, Kent.